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RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 001021

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STATE FOR DS, DSS, DS/T/ATA, AND DS/IP  
STATE FOR NEA/ARP ASHLEY BAGWELL AND SANJAY RAMESH  
STATE FOR EEB/TRA JOHN BYERLY, MEGAN WALKLET-TIGHE, AND WIN  
DAYTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2017

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ASEC](#) [KSAC](#) [OA](#)

SUBJECT: QATAR AIRWAYS SECURITY UPDATE

REF: DOHA 979

Classified By: CDA Michael A. Ratney, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Econoff visited Doha International Airport October 29 to observe security screening procedures for the direct Doha to Washington/Dulles flight (see reftel for background). The flight had 90 passengers flying out of the economy terminal and another 20 from the separate first and business class terminal. This is a larger load than observed in recent weeks when total loads were averaging 50-70 people, though still well below the capacity of the A340 aircraft. Econoff was only able to observe economy terminal screening procedures but the overall security procedures were consistent with recent improvements noted by TSA inspectors in their assessment ending early October. (Note: This one-day assessment is only intended as a spot report and cannot substitute for a technical visit/assessment by trained TSA inspectors.)

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¶2. (C) The gate was staffed with seven police officers (a supervisor, two x-ray observers, two male passenger screeners and two female passenger screeners), a Qatar Airways security supervisor, and several airline staff to assist in moving baggage and directing travelers. The police and air carrier supervisor did not/not need to micro-manage or carry out inspections themselves but were proactive in instructing screeners when questions arose and preventing contamination of hand-carry luggage (i.e., not allowing unscreened passengers to access their screened baggage). Consistent with TSA requirements, all passengers were required to remove belts and shoes, take laptops out of bags, and prevented from carrying on liquids in large amounts. In one case with a milk bottle for a small child (probably about 500ml), the police made the child take a sip but then let it pass. In another case, police found a needle with medicine being carried by a pregnant woman. The nature of the medication was unclear to Econoff, but the police sent the passenger to an airport nurse, who administered the shot so it would not need to be brought onboard.

¶3. (C) Male passengers who set off the metal detector (and some who did not) were hand-searched by the two male police officers. One did a more comprehensive job than the other (i.e., one would neglect sweeping the inside of the leg).

The female police are now wearing uniforms with long skirts (vice their previous abiyyas), which was a TSA recommendation and makes it easier for them to hand-search female passengers. The female police screeners were using hand wands behind a screen to search females who set off the detector, which contrasts with their earlier practice of using a hand-search. Overall, passenger screening appeared competent and thorough. (Note: The wider airport security remains a concern. For example, the originating passenger metal detectors did not seem similarly calibrated, as one alarmed and the other did not when Econoff passed through. For the one that alarmed, the police hand-search was very cursory.)

¶4. (C) COMMENT: While passenger screening for U.S. flights appears on the right track based on the above visit, Econoff will continue to make occasional visits to check on security operations. Post continues to believe that over the long-term, the police will need more training and staffing to ensure sustainability of screening to U.S. standards. Continuing the positive trend from TSA's visit, the police have shown more diligence and willingness to work with us on getting security right, and it is our understanding that 50-60 new officers will be dedicated in coming weeks to the checkpoints servicing U.S. flights. Post has identified the College of the North Atlantic in Qatar as a possible site to assist in training screeners on international standards and has encouraged both Qatar Airways and the police to look into utilizing this facility. A TSA Representative expects to visit Doha November 5-7 for further observations and meetings, and a TSA inspection team is scheduled to return about three weeks after that visit to assess and engage further with the GOQ on ensuring proper security for the U.S. flights.

RATNEY